

Assemblyman
PAUL KORETZ

Forty-second Assembly District

proudly representing the communities of West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, Century City, Westwood, Bel Air, Brentwood, West Los Angeles, Hollywood, Hancock Park, Universal City, Studio City, and Sherman Oaks



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DAVIS SIGNS AB 879 (KORETZ) ESTABLISHING PHYSICIAN GUIDELINES FOR HIV POST-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS

(**Sacramento**) Governor Gray Davis has signed AB 879, authored by Assemblyman Paul Koretz (D-West Hollywood) and passed by the California State Legislature with bipartisan support. The bill instructs the California Department of Health Services State Office of AIDS to convene a task force to develop state-approved physician guidelines for using post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) in cases of non-occupational exposure to HIV.

“Using PEP in cases of non-occupational exposure to HIV saves lives and saves money. State-approved physician recommendations will ensure that healthcare providers have the basic information needed for appropriate risk assessment and proper treatment,” said Assemblyman Koretz.

Post-exposure prophylaxis usually involves a 2-4 week regimen of antiretroviral medications such as AZT and 3TC beginning within 72 hours of a likely HIV exposure. Studies of healthcare workers exposed to HIV through accidental needle stick and splash exposures to the virus have found that PEP treatment reduces the risk of HIV infection by 81%. Studies in San Francisco also have shown that patients who have undergone PEP treatment for sexual exposures report reduced high-risk sexual behavior even one year after the treatment was completed.

“There seems to be a window of opportunity for safe sex counseling. Most people have an epiphany during the process of PEP treatment. They realize that any perceived benefit of unsafe behavior is out weighed by the prospect of taking antiretroviral drugs for the rest of their lives,” said Koretz.

AB 879 is sponsored by the Southern California HIV/AIDS Advocacy Coalition (SCHAC), a group of AIDS service providers and HIV positive individuals who advocate for better HIV public policy.

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"California physicians frequently find themselves struggling with a broad range of concerns when evaluating a patient for post-exposure prophylaxis, including making an accurate assessment of the exposure risk and determining the optimal treatment approach and duration. These guidelines will provide a standardized course of action when patients ask for PEP treatment in cases of nonoccupational needle or sexual exposures," said Tom Peterson, Co-Chair of SCHAC. "Every HIV infection that is prevented will reinforce the value of having PEP guidelines," he continued.

The cost of lifetime care and treatment for just one HIV-infected person is estimated to be approximately \$195,000 while the cost of a PEP treatment can be as low as \$640. Several health insurers such as Blue Cross of California and Kaiser Permanente of Southern California have recognized the human and financial benefits of PEP and have already offered its use for non-occupational HIV exposures.

"Adopting state guidelines for PEP treatment of inadvertent HIV exposures will promote its proper use, reduce the spread of this deadly disease, and could save insurers and the state millions in reduced treatment costs," said Paul Koretz.

Mr. Koretz is a member of the Assembly Health Committee and has been a leader in the effort to improve the lives of those affected by HIV/AIDS. Last year Koretz successfully authored AB 2197, a bill that expanded Medi-Cal coverage to HIV-positive, non-disabled individuals.

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